

Zhou Documents

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1996

## News: Chamber pots ruled out as a work of art

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hurt," an official in Kashgar said. The death toll was expected to rise.

Of the dead, seven were adults and the rest children, he said.

and another eight or more than 3.0 had rocked the region, an official of the seismological bureau in Artux said.

More than 10,000 people had been left homeless and 65,000 residents in the area of

official said. "I hid with my children in the toilet."

The Kashgar official said 18 schools collapsed along with 3,599 cattlesheds, killing at least 6,350 animals, mostly sheep.

# Chamber pots ruled out as a work of art

## Paris artist's offering said to be disrespectful

Agence France-Presse  
Shanghai

**A** Paris-based Chinese artist, returning to his native Shanghai to participate in an exhibition, has been forced to change his project because the organisers objected to his use of Chinese coins and chamber pots.

Chen Zhen, 40, an installation artist said the Shanghai Art Museum had initially accepted his proposal, but more senior authorities had objected to the work two days before the exhibition was due to open on March 18.

"The Shanghai Art Museum is quite liberal this time. They did not react strongly to what I can do or cannot do because they trusted me, but in China as soon as there is political involvement, things get complicated," he said.

"For my piece, they say you cannot use Chinese money and chamber pots because it is

not respectful and the chamber pot is a symbol of 'old Shanghai'. Presented together, they are too provocative," Chen said.

The Culture Bureau plans to make the "Shanghai Biennial '96" an international show in 2000.

"Since it is the first exhibition, we try to play it safe and please more people. Because we are still in the process of opening up, we have to consider everything. Otherwise, there will be no second time," the museum's deputy director, Chen Long, said.

Chen Zhen, who went to Paris in 1986, said he had agreed to change his project because he understood the "political game and influence" and his decision to stay would "be helpful to Chinese artists".

"At the end of one day, I said I had to withdraw, but finally I found a new material which is yellow grease, which is very symbolic," he said.

Chen originally wanted to set up a table with 36 holes which allowed a game to be played with the coins and iron balls representing stratagems with chamber pots under the holes.

Chamber pots are still in use in parts of Shanghai where the residents of old tenement blocks share outdoor toilets.

The table was meant to be a "mad juxtaposition of the capitalist system with the communist system; of old China and the new money mentality", he said.

Chen said the grease represented the Chinese race because of the colour and symbolised a recent pre-occupation of Shanghai people to *dao jiang hu*, literally meaning "to stir the glue" or "to make things difficult".

He said he dared to do the project in Shanghai because "I live overseas, so the government will not do anything to me, and I have the protection of the French government, so my mentality is not like that of local artists".

The project was also a "test of how far China has opened up, but it is still not as open as I hoped", Chen said.

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